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Tips to stay safe during snow cleanup

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Shoveling away all the snow from the Blizzard of 2026 can bring more than some minor aches and pains. But don't fret, there are some tips and tricks people can take to stay safe out there.

Dr. Lawrence Schiff, chief of the emergency department at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, said, first and foremost, preparation is key. Warming up, wearing proper clothing and drinking water before heading outside can help minimize the chance of frostbite, dehydration, or cardiac issues.

Once outside in the elements, shovelers should make sure to lift with their legs to prevent straining back muscles.

"Back pain is definitely the big thing, because people are deconditioned for the most part," said Dr. Schiff. "And now, especially on a day like today when there is a lot of snow, you may overdo it when you're not ready for it."
Shoulder, arm and wrist injuries can also occur from lifting too much. Dr. Schiff also said to be conscious of ice, to prevent slipping and potential lower-body or head injuries from hitting the ground.

Most dangerous of all, intense shoveling can cause cardiac issues. Dr. Schiff said that warm-up stretches and proper hydration can help mitigate problems, but people can develop chest pain, shortness of breath, sweating, dizziness, numbness in their face, arms, jaw and hands if they aren't careful.

He said that, even if someone doesn't have a pre-existing condition or doesn't suspect any issues, warming up and stretching can help get the body ready for the lifting and the weight of the extra clothing.

"It's just a lot for your heart to take in a short span of time," he said. "If you're out there for too long, you definitely will put an increased risk to your heart.